

# **Field Study Photographs for Historic Preservation**

**Volume 4  
The John Best House,  
July 17, 2003**

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PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE JOHN BEST HOUSE  
IN WINNEBOW, BRUNSWICK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA,  
TAKEN ON JULY 17, 2003

by

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## Introduction

John Best built his home in the pine forests of Winnebow in Brunswick County. The location, at the time of construction, was removed a considerable distance from the nearest utilities. He had come upon the site while working with a team that serviced a television tower in the area. Under the dense canopy of pines, the ground was marked with ancient furrows. The land had come been farmed, but not in recent times. There was one particular spot in a clearing that seemed to be an ideal site for a house. John located the owner of the property, and found him willing to sell an ample size parcel. After acquiring the land, John set about the task of designing a home that could be comfortable and functional without having to be dependent on electricity from a utility company. He faced many of the same problems the builders of earlier times faced. However, the solutions existed on the landscape, and in memory. In its design and construction, the John Best House would draw upon classic techniques found in the vernacular architecture of the Coastal Planes.

The house is composed of three distinct sections linked together by a porch. The first section, completed in the early 1980s, was a wood working shop. Mr. Best, a furniture maker by profession, intended to have a shop that could exploit natural illumination, was spacious, and had to be well ventilated. The design would be a single room with a shed roof. The east wall would rise to sixteen feet and would be fitted with large single pane windows near the roof hinged like a transom. The west wall would be fitted with a similar set of windows at chest height. When the windows were opened sufficient ventilation was achieved by convection. The windows provided ample natural light throughout the day. Mr. Best used post and beam construction. The beams were assembled from three 2" by 8" yellow pine boards that formed interlocking joints. Four sections of interconnected framework made up the entire weight-bearing members of the structures. On this frame were nailed horizontal planks of yellow pine for the walls and ceiling. The exterior was sheathed with vertical pillow pine planks using a board on board variant of the board and batten configuration. This sturdy structure rested on a post-in-ground platform foundation. The walls were connected to the foundation with pins.



Figure 1

This is a view of the drive leading to the John Best House.



Figure 2

The house includes a shop (1982) and living quarters (1986).



Figure 3

This is a view of rear of the house from the southwest.



Figure 4

This south side room has its own plumbing and lighting.

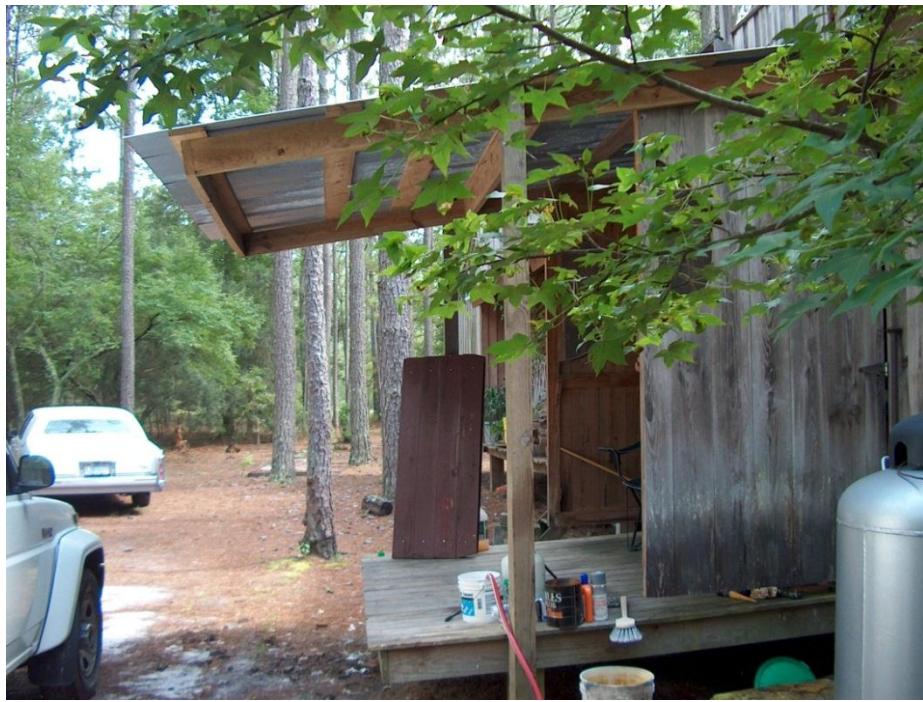


Figure 5

This is the loading platform for the shop.



Figure 6

Note the wooden bar lock on the shop door.



Figure 7

The window on the shop door has a half-moon design.



Figure 8

Located next to the shop windows is a tank house topped with solar panels.



Figure 9

The shop windows can be open like a transom window.



Figure 10

Here, the windows in the living quarters are covered with Plexiglas storm windows. They can be removed.



Figure 11

Steel sheathing is used as a roof covering.



Figure 12

A pump, powered by a propane generator, is used to fill the tank in the tank house. The water supply for the house



Figure 13

A walkway connects the porch with the shop



Figure 14

The house and shop is built on large pressure treated timbers.



Figure 15

Propane tanks

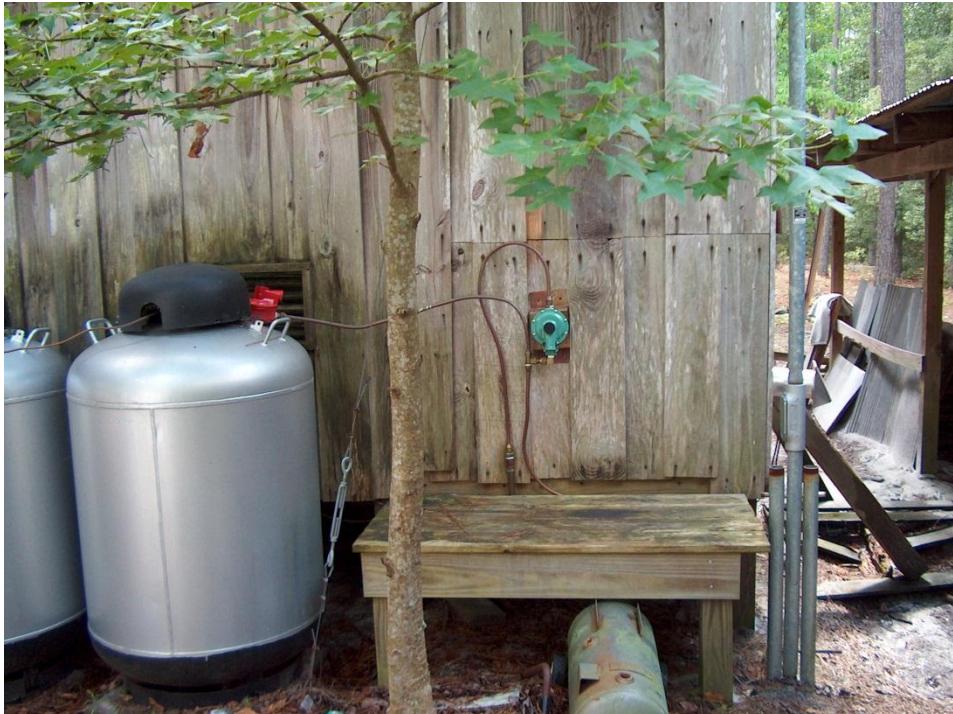


Figure 16

The gas regulator



Figure 17

This pipe houses the wires for the solar panels.



Figure 18

The wires go to a battery room in the shop.



Figure 19

This photograph shows the solar panel mounted on the tank house.



Figure 20

Lumber is stored under this shed.



Figure 21

The pump is located in the room to the right in the shed.



Figure 22

Another view of the pump house under the shed



Figure 23

The exhaust for the propane powered generator is located below the tank house.



Figure 24

There is a greenhouse for growing fresh vegetables.



Figure 25

This is the loft in the John Best House

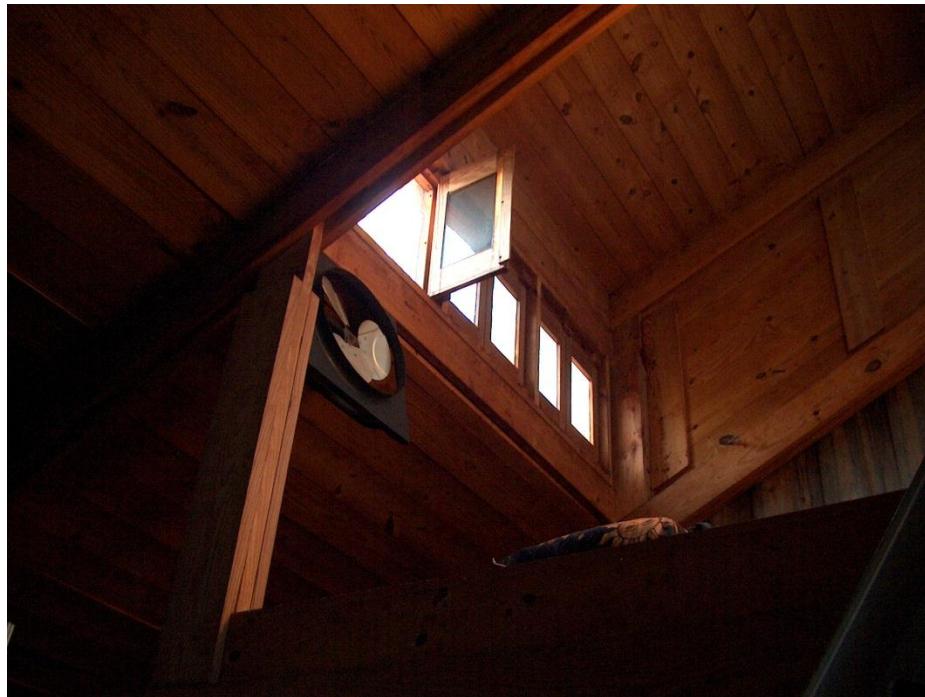


Figure 26

John Best built the house section in 1986 using a composite beam method.



Figure 27

Numerous windows provide ample illumination and ventilation.



Figure 28

The house uses bottled gas for interior illumination, heating, and a gas refrigerator.



Figure 29

The windows on front side face the east.



Figure 30

The electric fan runs on direct current.



Figure 31

This photograph shows details of the ceiling members.



Figure 32

There are windows on the west side of the house to let in afternoon sunlight. The interior like the outside is unfinished yellow pine.



Figure 33

This is the southeast corner of the house.



Figure 34

Light from the loft windows illuminates the kitchen space



Figure 35

The hinges and latches on the windows are made of wood.



Figure 37

This dirt road leads to the John Best House. It is located at least a mile into a pine forest. Mr. Best has no neighbors, and there are no other structures built in this forest.

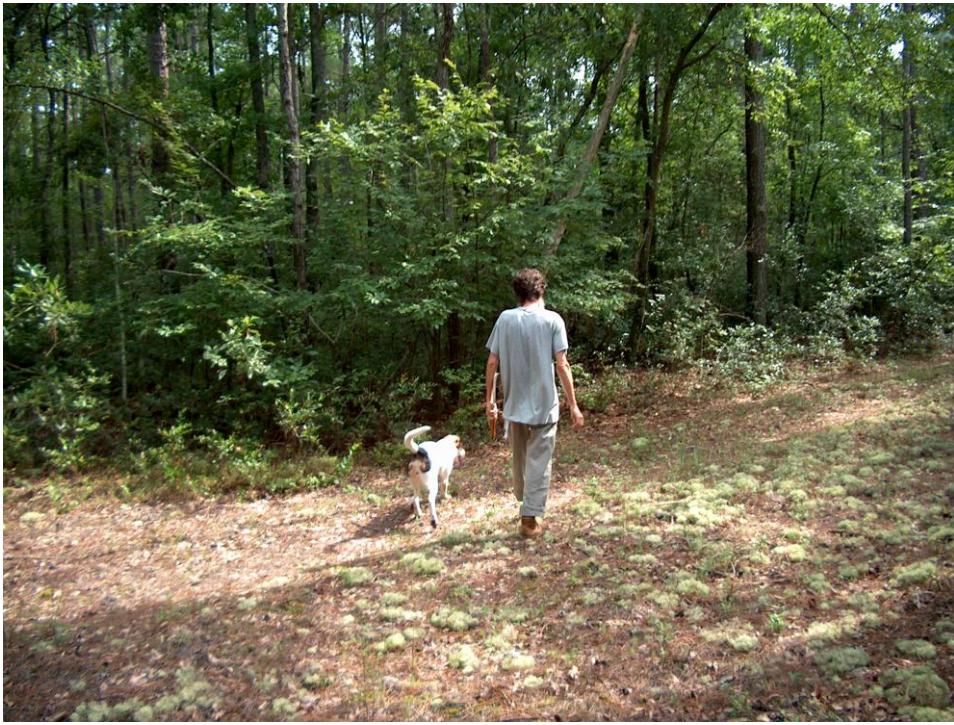


Figure 38

The John Best House fits into its forest surroundings. It is removed from the noise and ambient light of urban life.

